

Fall from height

Issued to: **Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and accredited contractors**

Ref: NRL20-04

Date of issue: 01/05/2020

Location: Paddington Station, London

Contact: [Suzanne Kay](#), Capital Delivery Wales & Western



Overview

A serious accident occurred over the Christmas period when a worker fell from a mobile scaffold tower on Platform 11 of Paddington Station. He suffered fractured vertebrae, ribs and a collar bone. He is recovering from his injuries.

This activity had originally been planned for the day shift, but had been transferred to the night shift without a formal method of handover between shifts or the arrangements.

The team undertaking the testing works had signed in with a COSS doing unrelated work and started work despite being instructed by that COSS not to commence work. No Form C had been issued to confirm overhead line isolation and the testers would have been out of the COSS's line of sight.

The person in charge of the activity had not been involved in planning the task. Work at height should have been identified during the planning stage, as this activity could not be done from the ground.

Underlying causes

A mobile scaffold tower, had been left at site by a different team three hours earlier and not there for this task, was used. The tower should have been tagged and labelled as incomplete as it had been disassembled and reassembled multiple times over the course of the day, the last time leaving it incomplete.

No one in the group was competent to use the scaffold tower. Neither worker recognised the risk posed by the poorly constructed tower, though CCTV showed them checking the tower for stability and deciding to use it anyway.

Key message

- Specific task risks must be considered as part of the planning arrangements.
- When plans/arrangements change, an impact assessment must be undertaken to ensure supervision the safe systems of work are continued, including at shift change.
- Everyone on site must take personal responsibility to look out for and challenge unsafe acts.
- Scaffold towers must be managed and controlled like any other equipment, to prevent unauthorised access.
- Network Rail and Colas Rail have jointly put together [a video](#) to show the build up to the accident and the many missed opportunities to challenge unsafe acts.